



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: August 22, 1990

In reply refer to: H-90-87

Mr. Brian G. Dyson
President and Chief Executive Officer
Coca-Cola Enterprises, Inc.
P.O. Box 1778
Atlanta, GA 30301

About 7:34 a.m., central daylight time, on Thursday, September 21, 1989, a westbound school bus with 81 students operated by the Mission Consolidated Independent School District, Mission, Texas, and a northbound delivery truck operated by the Valley Coca-Cola Bottling Company, McAllen, Texas, collided at Bryan Road and Farm-to-Market Road Number 676 (FM 676) in Alton, Texas. Nineteen students died at the accident scene, and two died later in the hospital. The 21 fatalities were the result of drowning or complications related to the submersion. Furthermore, 3 students sustained serious injuries, 46 others sustained minor injuries, and 11 students were not injured.¹

In August 1987, Coca-Cola Enterprises, Inc., of Atlanta, Georgia, purchased the privately owned/operated McAllen Bottling Company and began operating it under its Texas district authority as Valley Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Inc. This company is a private carrier that markets soft drinks in bottles, cans, and carbonated dispenser units. It operates out of two locations at McAllen and San Benito, Texas. At the time of the accident the company owned 326 vehicles, 269 were in service. The others were reserve and surplus units. One hundred and sixty two units, including the vehicle involved in the accident, and three mechanics were assigned to the McAllen plant. One hundred and seven units, two mechanics, and one helper were assigned to San Benito. Valley Bottling Company owned approximately 58 units similar to the accident unit, 36 assigned to the McAllen plant. Valley Bottling Company employed 66 drivers, 44 assigned to handle 36 routes out of

¹For more detailed information, read Highway Accident Report--"Collision between Mission Consolidated Independent School District School Bus and Valley Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Inc., Tractor-Semitrailer, Intersection of Bryan Road and Texas Farm-to-Market Road Number 676, in Alton, Texas, September 21, 1989" (NTSB/HAR-90-02).

the McAllen facility. The routes were considered to be local because the majority were within a 25 mile radius of the facilities.

The Safety Board believes that Valley Bottling Company failed to use a sufficient number of mechanics or have adequate procedures to ensure that proper vehicle maintenance was performed in accordance with manufacturer specifications.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Coca-Cola Enterprises, Inc.:

Conduct a review and evaluate the number of mechanics and the provided resources in each of its operations to ensure that proper vehicle maintenance is performed in accordance with manufacturer specifications. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-90-87)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations H-90-74 through -78 and reiterated H-89-5 to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; H-90-79 through -80 to the Texas Department of Public Safety; H-90-81 to the Texas Education Agency; H-90-82 through -83 to the Hidalgo County; H-90-84 through -85 to the City of Alton; H-90-86 to the Mission Consolidated Independent School District; H-90-88 through -89 to the Valley Coca-Cola Bottling Co., Inc.; and H-90-90 to the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services.

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility "to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any action taken as a result of its safety recommendations. Therefore, it would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendation H-90-87 in your reply.

KOLSTAD, Chairman, COUGHLIN, Vice Chairman, and LAUBER and BURNETT, Members, concurred in this recommendation.


By: James L. Kolstad
Chairman